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THE THREE DAYS'

BATTLE OF CHATTANOOGA,

23d, 24th, 25th November, 1863.

AN

UNOFFICIAL DISPATCH FROM GENERAL MEIGS,

QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES,

TO THE

HON. E. M. STANTON, SECRETARY OF WAR.

ACCOMPANIED BY
A PLAN OF THE BATTLE, FURNISHED BY THE U. S.
COAST SURVEY OFFICE.

NEW YORK:
PRESENTED TO THE U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION
BY JULIUS BIEN AND WM. M. FRANKLIN.
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BATTLE OF CHATTANOOGA.

TELEGRAPHIC DISPATCH.

HEAD-QUARTERS, U. S. QUARTERMASTER'S DEPARTMENT,
IN THE FIELD,
CHATTANOOGA, TENN., *November* 26, 1863.

Hon. E. M. STANTON,
Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.

SIR: On the 23d, at 11½ A. M., General Grant ordered a demonstration against Mission Ridge, to develop the force holding it. The troops marched out, formed in order, advanced in line of battle, as if on parade. The rebels watched the formation and movement from their picket lines and rifle-pits, and from the summits of Mission Ridge, five hundred feet above us, and thought it was a review and drill, so openly, so deliberately, so regularly was it all done.

As the line advanced, preceded by skirmishers, and at 2 P. M., reached our picket lines, they opened a rattling volley upon the rebel pickets, which replied and ran into their

advanced line of rifle-pits. After them went our skirmishers, and into them, along the centre of the line of twenty-five thousand troops, which General Thomas had so quickly displayed.

Until we opened fire, prisoners assert that they thought the whole movement was a review and general drill, and then it was too late to send to their camps for re-enforcements, and they were overwhelmed by force of numbers. It was a surprise in open daylight.

At 3 P. M., the important advanced position of "Orchard Knob" and the lines right and left were in our possession, and arrangements were ordered for holding them during the night.

The next day at daylight, General Sherman had five thousand men across the Tennessee, established on its south bank, and commenced the construction of a pontoon bridge about six miles above Chattanooga.

The rebel steamer "Dunbar," repaired at the right moment, rendered effective aid in this crossing, ferrying over some six thousand men.

By nightfall, General Sherman had seized the extremity of Mission Ridge nearest the river, and was intrenching himself.

General Howard, with a brigade, opened communication with him from Chattanooga on the south side of the river.

Skirmishing and cannonading continued all day on the left and centre. General Hooker scaled the slopes of Lookout Mountain from the valley of Lookout Creek, drove the rebels around the point, captured some two thousand prisoners, and established himself high up the mountain side, in full view of Chattanooga. This raised the blockade, and our steamers were ordered from Bridgeport to Chattanooga. They had run only to Kelly's Ferry, whence ten miles of hauling over mountain roads and twice crossing the Tennessee on pontoon bridges brought us our supplies.

All night the point of Mission Ridge, on the extreme left, and the side of Lookout Mountain, on the extreme right, blazed with the camp fires of loyal troops. The day had been one of driving mists and rains, and much of Hooker's battle was fought above the clouds, which concealed him from our view, but from which his musketry was heard.

At nightfall the sky cleared, and the full moon, the "hunter's moon," shone upon the beautiful scene.

Till 1 A. M., twinkling sparks upon the mountain side showed that picket skirmishing was still going on; then it ceased.

A brigade sent from Chattanooga crossed Chattanooga Creek, and opened communication with Hooker soon after nightfall.

General Grant's head-quarters during the afternoon of the

23d and the day of the 24th were in Wood's redoubt, except when in the course of the day we rode along the advanced lines, visiting the head-quarters of the several commanders in Chattanooga valley.

At daylight on the 25th, the stars and stripes were discerned on the peak of Lookout. The rebels had evacuated the mountain. Hooker moved to descend the mountain, and, striking Mission Ridge at the Rossville Gap, to sweep it on both sides and on its summit.

The rebel troops were seen, as soon as it was light enough, streaming, by regiments and brigades, along the narrow summit of Mission Ridge, either concentrating on their right to overwhelm Sherman, or marching for the railroad and raising the siege. They had evacuated the valley of Chattanooga; would they abandon that of the Chickamauga?

The 30-pounders and 4½-inch rifles of Wood's redoubt opened on Mission Ridge. Orchard Knob sent its compliments to the ridge, which with rifled Parrotts answered, and the cannonade thus commenced continued all day. Shot and shell screamed from Orchard Knob to Mission Ridge, from Mission Ridge to Orchard Knob, and from Wood's redoubt, over the heads of General Grant and General Thomas and their staffs, who were with us in this favorable position, whence the whole could be seen as in an amphitheatre.

Head-quarters were under fire all day long. Cannonading and musketry were heard from General Sherman. Howard marched the Eleventh Corps to join him.

Thomas sent out skirmishers, who drove in the rebel pickets, and even shook them in their intrenchments at the foot of Mission Ridge.

Sherman sent an assault against Bragg's right, intrenched on a high knob, next to that on which Sherman himself lay fortified.

The assault was gallantly made, reached the edge of the crest, held its ground for what seemed to me an hour, but was then bloodily repulsed by reserves.

A general advance was ordered, and a strong line of skirmishers, followed by a deployed line of battle, some two miles in length, at the signal of six cannon-shots from the head-quarters on Orchard Knob, moved rapidly and orderly forward.

The rebel pickets discharged their muskets and ran into their rifle-pits; our skirmishers followed on their heels; the line of battle was not far behind; and we saw the gray rebels swarm out of the long line of rifle-pits in numbers which surprised us, and spread over the base of the hill. A few turned and fired their pieces, but the greater number collected into the various roads which creep obliquely up its steep face, and went on to the top. Some regiments

pressed on and began to swarm up the steep sides of the ridge. Here and there a color was advanced beyond the line. The attempt appeared most dangerous; but the advance was supported, and the whole line ordered to storm the heights, upon which not less than forty pieces of artillery, and no one knew how many muskets, stood ready to slaughter the assailants.

With cheers answering to cheers, the men swarmed upwards. They gathered to the lines of least difficult ascent, and the line was broken. Color after color was planted on the summit, while musketry and cannon vomited their thunder upon them. A well-directed shot from Orchard Knob exploded a rebel caisson on the summit. A gun was seen galloping to the right, its driver lashing his horses. A party of our soldiers intercepted him, and the gun was captured with cheers.

A fierce musketry fight broke out to the left where, between Thomas and Sherman, a mile or two of the ridge was still occupied by the rebels. Bragg left the house in which he had held his head-quarters, and rode to the rear, as our troops crowned the hill on each side of him.

General Grant proceeded to the summit, and then only did we know its height.

Some of the captured artillery was put into position, artillerists were sent for to work the guns, caissons were

searched for ammunition. The rebel log breastworks were torn to pieces and carried to the other side of the ridge, and used in forming barricades across it. A strong line of infantry was formed in the rear of Baird's line, hotly engaged in a musketry contest with the rebels to the left, and a secure lodgment was soon effected.

The other assault to the right of our centre gained the summit, and the rebels threw down their arms and fled. Hooker coming in from Rossville swept the right of the ridge and captured many prisoners.

Bragg's remaining troops left early in the night, and the battle of Chattanooga, after three days of manœuvring and fighting, was won. The strength of the rebellion in the centre was broken; Burnside relieved from danger in East Tennessee; Kentucky and Tennessee redeemed; Georgia and the Southeast threatened in the rear, and another victory added to the chaplet of Unconditional Surrender Grant.

To-night the estimate of captures is several thousand prisoners and thirty pieces of artillery. Loss for so great a victory not severe. Bragg is firing the railroad as he retreats towards Dalton; Sherman is in hot pursuit.

To-day I visited the battle-field, which extends for six miles along Mission Ridge, and for several miles on Lookout Mountain.

Probably no so well-directed, so well-ordered a battle has

been delivered during the war. But one assault was repulsed; but that assault, by calling to that point the reserves, prevented their repulsing any of the others.

A few days since, Bragg sent to General Grant a flag of truce to advise him that it would be prudent to remove any non-combatants who might be still in Chattanooga. No reply has been returned, but, the combatants having been removed from this vicinity, it is probable that the non-combatants can remain without imprudence.

May I suggest that your visit to Louisville, with the measures there inaugurated, have done the cause in this quarter much good. It would be well to visit us here, and also for the President to review an army which has done so much for the country, and which has not yet seen his face.

(Signed) M. C. Meigs,

Quartermaster-General.

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